

Office of Advocacy

Advocating for BDS Clients

Protecting the rights and dignity of the Department of Behavioral and Developmental Service's (BDS) clients is paramount to providing quality services to people with mental illness and mental retardation.

The Office of Advocacy was established by statute to investigate the claims and grievances of clients of the department and to investigate allegations of abuse, neglect and exploitation of adults with mental retardation. Advocates investigate alleged violations of the rights of persons with mental retardation, and since 1982 have performed the adult protective function that under statute is vested in BDS. Also key to its purpose is to advocate on behalf of consumers for compliance by any institution, facility or agency administered, licensed or funded by BDS with all laws, administrative rules and institutional and other policies relating to the rights and dignity of clients.

Advocates receive and refer complaints made by clients of the department and represent their interest in these matters, assist clients in any hearing or grievance proceeding of the department, and act as an information resource for consumers.

Specifically, the Office of Advocacy staff represent clients in hearings, grievance proceedings and in adult protective investigations for persons with mental retardation.

They also advocate for consumers represented in the AMHI Consent Decree and the Community Consent Decree in mental retardation services. The children's advocate works closely with the system of special education services in public schools. Monitoring the implementation of the Rights of Recipients of Mental Health Services is a major focus of the office resources.

Advocates, working in conjunction with members of the Consumer Advisory Board, monitor on an individualized basis the implementation of severely intrusive behavior modification plans and behavior management techniques for people with mental retardation.

On behalf of their clients, the advocates interact with many people from State Government agencies and private agencies, as well as community members. They also provide training to direct support personnel about the rights of clients and work with the Consumer Advisory Board and the Disability Rights Center toward mutual goals of serving people with mental retardation and mental illness.

For more information about BDS visit:
www.state.me.us/bds/



State of Maine
Department of Behavioral
and Developmental Services

Lynn F. Duby, Commissioner

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